

## Chapter 7

# Developing Sustainability in the Lake Superior Basin: 2006 Progress Report



Ashland, Wisconsin, contaminated sediment sign.  
Photo Credit: John Marsden, Environment Canada.

Lake Superior Lakewide Management Plan  
2006

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### 7.0 ABOUT THIS CHAPTER

**Accomplishments.** Since we last updated Chapter 9 of the LaMP in 2004, the Developing Sustainability Committee (DSC) has focused on a variety of projects aimed at meeting the sustainability objectives of the Lake Superior Binational Program. In addition to providing assistance and information to various environmental and civic organizations in the watershed, members of the committee also worked with the Forum to integrate sustainability education into the Lake Superior Leadership program and provided guidance to workgroups dealing with the Presidential Executive Order on the Great Lakes (i.e., the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration). As detailed below, the committee also coordinated the completion of two major projects forecast in the previous LaMP for Lake Superior (i.e., the first phase of our community-based survey of and education regarding sustainability and a riparian conservation easement demonstration project).

**Challenges.** Since the inception of the Lake Superior Binational Program, one of our greatest challenges has been to promote awareness of the need for sustainability throughout the basin. Given the rise in local and regional efforts to advance the cause of sustainability in recent years, we believe citizens in the watershed have slowly begun to consider more than immediate social and economic interests when planning for the future. Although much work still needs to be done, we can celebrate the progress that is occurring.

**Next Steps.** Limited resources hinder the DSC's ability to pursue a number of additional projects. For example, we are now at the point to collect and analyze a second set of data relevant to our "Baseline Sustainability Indicators" project, thus allowing more of a longitudinal measure of changes in the economic and social conditions that move basin residents toward or away from sustainable lifestyles. The "Baseline Sustainability Indicators" project was completed in 2000 to determine the status of basinwide sustainability. This project examined a wide range of existing databases to also determine the extent to which sustainability trends could be observed without creating new indexes or gathering additional information.

We would like to enter the second phase of our "Community Awareness Review and Development" initiative (see below). And the committee still plans to investigate and facilitate sustainability education in the region by working with K-12 educators as well as hosting a First Nations conference on indigenous systems of knowledge that would serve to inform community leaders throughout the basin.

## **7.1 SELECTED ACTIVITIES**

A sample of the kinds of activities recently pursued by the DSC, as well as independent community-based initiatives that complement our efforts regarding regional sustainability, is provided on the following pages.

### **7.1.1 Community Awareness Review and Development Project**

In 2005, Phase I of the Community Awareness Review and Development (CARD) project sponsored by the DSC was completed. The overall intent of the CARD is to increase knowledge and awareness of issues relevant to the Lake Superior Binational Program and the LaMP in order to foster improved decision-making within the basin. Our objective in Phase I was to better understand the attitudes and awareness of residents regarding sustainability and environmental issues that mattered in local communities so as to specifically tailor outreach campaigns germane to the goals of the Binational Program.

All committees of the Binational Program cooperated in developing the Phase I CARD survey, and surveys previously used in the basin were examined to determine the extent to which the areas of interest had already been assessed. Analysis of more than a dozen other instruments (drawn from interest-group, agency-based, and academic research conducted over 15 years) revealed little if any direct overlap with the CARD focus. To that end, we hoped to produce a survey that could meet a number of objectives: providing a demographic profile for the sample, allowing respondents free-choice in qualitatively describing their most important concerns of local and regional interest, isolating quantitative reactions to various LaMP related issues, and assessing differences between knowledge of and concerns over a range of environmental concerns. After several versions of the survey were considered, pilot testing of the final instrument in Ontario and the U.S. confirmed that respondents could complete the survey in 10 to 15 minutes. Subsequently, in the U.S., we surveyed intact community organizations such as service/community, business/economic development, tourism/recreation, environmental, local government, education, youth, and church groups from nine basin communities (i.e., Iron Range, Duluth, Two Harbors, Grand Marais, Newberry, Marquette, Houghton, Ironwood, Ashland and Superior). We distributed 955 surveys with a 29 percent response rate. In Canada, a mass-mailing was sent to more than 3,000 residents in four communities (i.e., Thunder Bay, Wawa, Marathon and Sault Ste. Marie), resulting in a 25 percent response rate, and a similar project is currently being conducted for the First Nations in the basin.

Once all data had been collected, U.S. and Canadian contractors coded the qualitative responses using an inductive coding scheme which, along with the original quantitative responses, were input into a spreadsheet for statistical analysis. Additional procedures were then used to determine the extent to which dominant themes clustered together or were related to one another in systematic ways. Thus, the coding process resulted in our being able to generate a more useful understanding of how respondents differ from one another as well as what they consider to be the most salient aspects of their lives in their respective communities. In the end, various analyses were conducted to reveal patterns of awareness and concern.

When asked to identify the most pressing issues facing their particular community, respondents in the basin identified a wide range of general and specific issues associated with economic, environmental, and social conditions. Most of those surveyed cited economic concerns (e.g., employment) as most pressing, even though (especially in Canada) environmental concerns were quite often listed as well. When our respondents identified environmental issues, several types of concerns were elicited (i.e., natural resources, overall pollution, contaminated sites, mercury pollution, toxins in food, pesticides/herbicides, noise pollution, light pollution, invasive species, exotic species, agriculture, forestry, mining/drilling, planning and development, shoreline development, open space loss, habitat loss or fragmentation, wetlands, erosion/watershed management, septic/sewer systems, storm water, water quality, drinking water, water quantity, water privatization, air quality, global warming, energy conservation, pest problems, fish and wildlife, recycling, and hazardous waste). Of these, the largest percentage of responses in the U.S. indicated that people were mostly concerned with watershed-related concerns (and, to a lesser extent, land-use practices) at a personal, community, state, and Lake Superior basinwide level. In Canada, air and energy issues were top concerns when the focus was on the province as a whole, water issues when the focus was on the Lake Superior basin, and water and garbage issues when the focus was on the community and the household.

The CARD survey also focused on a number of specific areas of particular interest to different work group committees. Roughly half of the respondents indicated that their water (most often associated with a municipal system) had been tested in the last four years. Most reported that they generally conserve oil, gas, or electrical energy, though less than half reported a discerned effort to conserve water. Most respondents were using municipal waste disposal systems, yet 5 percent (Canada) to 19 percent (U.S.) continue the practice of open burning of garbage (and significant numbers of those sampled perceive that the practice is quite common in their communities). Although most were aware of the need and opportunity to safely dispose of hazardous waste in their communities, at most only 25 percent reported “always” using the program if it is available. Less than half of either the Canadian or U.S. samples were aware of local watershed management programs, and 72 percent reported an awareness of local land trusts and conservancies in the U.S. (50 percent in Canada). While many U.S. respondents knew of local fish consumption advisories, two-thirds of those in Canada were unaware (41 percent) or unsure (24 percent). Nonetheless, of those who knew of fish consumption advisories in Canada, 32 percent indicated they ate less fish because of the information; in the U.S., even fewer reported substantial changes in their consumption patterns. Finally, most respondents cited “inconvenience” or a perceived lack of self-efficacy when describing why some citizens persist in conducting themselves in an environmentally unsustainable manner.

Respondents were asked to rate both their level of knowledge and level of personal concern regarding issues in four general areas – water pollution, air pollution, land use, and health issues. In general, they indicated modest levels of knowledge and higher scores for personal concern across the range of issues associated those areas. No more than one third reported that they knew a great deal about, or were similarly concerned over, any given issue. Furthermore, correlations between knowledge and concern were, by and large, modest at best.

The findings of the Phase I CARD survey suggest four general conclusions that may be of use to the Lake Superior Binational Program. First, our respondents were significantly more concerned

about economic issues than they were about the environment. Second, when they were asked to specifically focus on environmental issues linked to the basin or their communities, those sampled cited issues associated with water and land-use more than any others. Third, there remains only a modest association between personal concerns over environmental issues and changes in lifestyles or behavior. Finally, the modest correlations between beliefs and values may be used to design effective advocacy and educational campaigns at the local level.

In light of this study, we can assume that future community-based social marketing approaches to educate and persuade citizens in the Lake Superior basin may be modestly successful. At that time, we will want to (a) focus on the areas of water, land use, and economics; (b) tailor campaigns to particular community interests; (c) demonstrate how threats may be averted and economic opportunities capitalized upon in a way that is convenient, efficacious, and economical; and (d) primarily rely upon electronic and newspaper venues for delivering information (since our respondents clearly preferred such means of communication over workshops or other avenues).

In light of the Phase I CARD study, we can assume that specific community-based social marketing approaches to inform citizens in the Lake Superior basin may be modestly successful, given available resources. Such specific marketing approaches might also be warranted at this time for at least two related reasons:

1. Data from our project reveals that those in the Lake Superior basin have not generally recognized the importance of LaMP related issues, let alone the existence of the Binational Program per se. Even in those communities where local initiatives have focused on increasing citizens' awareness of issues such as water quality, habitat protection, or sustainable lifestyles (e.g., Thunder Bay, Marquette), many seem to believe that most threats to ecosystem integrity have been mitigated, are irrelevant to their daily lives, or are not being addressed by broad scale initiatives such as the zero discharge demonstration focus of the LaMP. In short, we not only need to increase the awareness or "branding" of the Lake Superior Binational Program and LaMP, but more importantly, we need to significantly increase local knowledge regarding pivotal issues and options that pertain to those initiatives.
2. In addition to the sundry other programs currently promoted by natural resource and environmental protection agencies at the federal, provincial, and state level (e.g., Forest Service's L.U.C.I.D. initiative, US EPA's Energy Star program, various NRCS activities), the Lake Superior Binational Program directly or indirectly deals with at least four major concerns: (a) its own load reduction schedules for persistent bioaccumulative substances, (b) a broader program of ecosystem remediation and management in the region, (c) a substantial role in Great Lakes-wide initiatives such as the Binational Toxics Strategy and SOLEC, and (d) an emerging focus on watershed-based analysis and delivery of environmental programming. To greater or lesser degrees, the success of our efforts to address each of these areas of concern depends on having those in the Lake Superior watershed understand the extent to which they complement one another, as well as how much local conditions and opportunities can be better dealt with by working in concert with the separate programs.

As a specific case in point, consider the pattern of responses represented by the Two Harbors (MN) respondents. Unlike other communities in Minnesota that cited watershed management issues as the most important issue facing their respective localities, Two Harbors identified land use practices most often, with air quality coming in second (though 71 percent believed that water quality and the like was the most pressing issue to the basin as a whole). Of this sample, 17 percent indicated that they burned at least some of their garbage (and estimated that 8 percent of their entire community did as well). Consequently, the Two Harbors area could be targeted for increased burn barrel outreach and projects (e.g., a barrel-for-a-barrel swap), especially when you consider their concern about air pollution. However, any outreach campaign dealing with the open burning of garbage issue (or any other as well) would necessarily have to stress the convenience of any personal pollution control or land-use option; 100 percent of the respondents in Two Harbors reported “being too busy” as the primary reason for citizens continuing environmentally destructive behavior.

For an alternative illustration, consider the example of Ironwood (MI). Ironwood is a relatively compact community that has experienced a good deal of economic downturn in recent decades. As a consequence, 67 percent of those surveyed in CARD Phase I cited economic issues as their primary concern (as opposed to, say, Marquette (MI) where only 27 percent focused on the economy), and no respondent identified the environment as most pressing (cf. 29 percent for Marquette). Thus, a tailored media campaign and set of discussions with community planners in Ironwood would significantly focus upon economic development vis a vis promoting LaMP issues. Furthermore, insofar as fully half of those surveyed focused on water-related issues when specifically asked about the natural environment, watershed management issues would likely be grounded in the outreach activities, especially since 50 percent of the sample reported being unaware of current watershed management plans. It’s not that other issues would be ignored; rather, those areas might be highlighted along with other more watershed-relevant issues such as the existence of local land trusts and forest fragmentation, in terms of their economic relationship to broad-based water quality concerns.

### **7.1.2 Lake Superior Land Trust Partnership**

Since 2002, land trusts and conservancies working in the Lake Superior basin have been partnering to discuss common concerns and needs, develop regional strategies, and promote a wide range of issues relevant to the LaMP. The Lake Superior Land Trust Partnership (LSLTP) has been coordinated and supported through the efforts of the Land Trust Alliance, and the Lake Superior Binational Program has taken an active role in providing information and drawing links between the work of the partnership and the broader ecosystem goals of the program. In particular, the watershed approach and critical habitat mapping projects reviewed in the integrated ecosystem chapter of the LaMP, as well as the tripartite focus on social and economic factors along with environmental integrity that buttresses the work of the Developing Sustainability Committee, have assisted the LSLTP through ongoing and active participation by work group members in partnership meetings.

The goal of the LSLTP—and what makes this partnership unique—is to focus on the advancement of private land conservation through private nonprofit organizations that

collectively span the three states and province included within the Lake Superior basin. Figure 7-1 illustrates the LSLTP service areas. The organization also clearly recognizes the importance of engaging public agencies at the federal, state, provincial and local levels since such partnerships are one key strategy for protecting resources within the basin.

At present, the LSLTP includes each of the land trusts and conservancies located within the Lake Superior basin. These partners represent groups with a wide variety of organizational capacity and scope of service, plus national organizations that are active within the watershed. With support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the LSLTP has convened three 2-day meetings for each of the past three years. At these meetings the participants share ideas, as well as conduct joint problem solving and training sessions on topics of common interest (e.g., understanding the opportunities and challenges to cross-border projects, conservation easement monitoring, and working forest conservation easements).

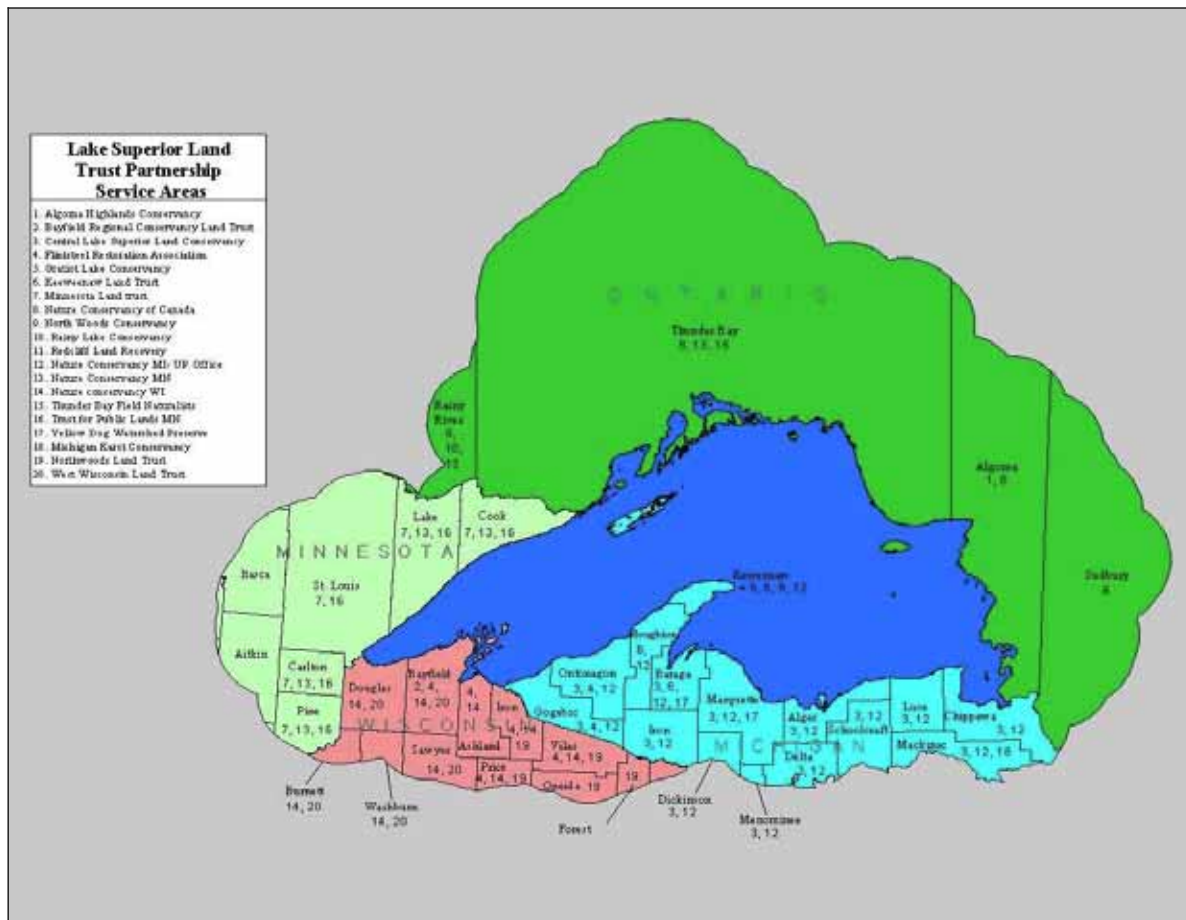


Figure 7-1. Lake Superior Land Trust Partnership Service Areas.

In addition to private foundation support, the LSLTP is assisted by a variety of other organizations. For example:

- The Land Trust Alliance has awarded nine Lake Superior Strategic Conservation Grants to various partner organizations. This initiative is intended to help land trusts implement



common standards and practices, assist with the implementation of the Lake Superior Land Trust Partnership goals, and protect freshwater ecosystems of significance to the Lake Superior basin (especially those identified in the LaMP as comprising critical habitats).

- The Great Lakes Advancement Grants Program helped expand the capacity of two partners, the Keweenaw Land Trust (MI) and the Bayfield Regional Conservancy (WI). Great Lakes Advancement Grants are intended to assist land trusts in building their organizational capacity and expertise with the goal of becoming healthier, more vital organizations capable of protecting significant freshwater ecosystems in perpetuity.
- The Nature Conservancy has funded a series of site conservation planning exercises around the basin so as to help develop effective strategies for conserving functional, working landscapes. The sites addressed by this initiative included the watershed area and estuary of the Pigeon River on the border of Minnesota and Ontario, the Rainy Lake complex situated at the western edge of the basin, the Presque Isle/Ontonagon River watershed extending from north central Wisconsin across the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and the Upper Peninsula's Michigamme Highlands that contain the most rugged and remote wilderness areas in the state. This highly participatory process provided local project teams a rich opportunity to give and receive critical inquiry from a variety of conservation professionals, share ideas regarding the role land trusts and conservancies play in promoting regional sustainability, and develop specific strategies for conserving resources critical to selected priority conservation areas in the watershed.

Aside from the cooperative projects sponsored by the LSLTP, the partnering conservancies and land trusts that constitute the organization also draw upon its collective expertise and the resources of the Lake Superior Binational Program to pursue their own, individual initiatives. A prime example of how such local projects contribute to the LaMP and regional sustainability can be seen in the Central Lake Superior Land Conservancy's (CLSLC) recently completed "Riparian Remediation Buffer" project funded by US EPA through its Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO).

Historically, the central portion of Michigan's Upper Peninsula was well known for the quality of its lakes and streams. In the past century, however, increasing urbanization has resulted in greater concentrations of non-point pollution, the loss of native riparian habitat, and more sedimentation. It is well understood that a healthy and thriving riparian environment requires an abundance of vegetation—preferably species adapted to its particular eco-region—and the use of planned buffer strips between developments and waterways has proven valuable in filtering contaminants, preventing sedimentation, and improving both aquatic and terrestrial habitat conditions. Nonetheless, property owners typically remain unaware of or ambivalent toward the protection of lakeside or streamside habitat. People also find it difficult to envision how riparian habitat repatriation works, the extent to which it can improve upon aesthetics, and the cost savings that can accrue from its institutionalization on the land. And, given the cynicism that often follows history, there also exists a widespread suspicion that what we do today in the name of conservation can easily be undone by future landowners who bring with them a different set of values. To address this situation, the CLSLC applied for and received a GLNPO grant to

demonstrate the value and sustainability of using native plants and binding conservation easement agreements (CEAs) to remediate five riparian sites in the Lake Superior basin.

The first stage of the remediation demonstration project involved identifying a range of private landholdings containing riparian habitats that have experienced either substantial human modification of streamside or lakeside vegetation (e.g., management of non-native turf grass all the way to the water's edge) or significant erosion caused by human activity (e.g., access to private boat landings or leisure sites). In the end, the Conservancy identified five geographically distributed parcels divided between various types of riparian landscapes and ownership land-use patterns (i.e., a large lot on a relatively developed lake with an existing home, a residential lot on an urban stream, and a recreational or vacation home on a major river, a residence on a stream in an area currently experiencing pressures for further development, and conference center on a popular lake surrounded by both seasonal and year-round residences). The owners of each of the five demonstration parcels consented to placing a CEA on a portion of their property, including specific provisions for the permanence of restored riparian habitat.

Once landowners had agreed to preserve in perpetuity the riparian areas they possessed, an in-depth assessment of what was required for the remediation of each demonstration site was conducted. Native plant specialists associated with the Marquette County Conservation District and technicians from the Natural Resource Conservation Service were used to identify cost effective options commensurate with the goals of the project and provisions in the newly contracted CEAs. In turn, appropriate flora was ordered from sources at the Conservation District or identified for gathering at local native plant locations. Contracted workers and/or volunteers (e.g., college student interns, Student Conservation Association members) were used to rehabilitate the riparian areas at each demonstration site, and construction materials (e.g., timbers, rock riprap) were purchased from or donated by local organizations.

As each demonstration site was rehabilitated, local media were used to promote the goals of the project and report on the successes of the initiative. Through collaborative efforts with the other partners on this project (e.g., The Nature Conservancy—Upper Peninsula Office, Central Lake Superior Watershed Partnership, Marquette County Conservation District, USDA—Forest Service, and JZ Environmental Consultants), the Riparian Remediation Buffer Project was discussed in a workshop designed to assist landowners, foresters, and other natural resource professionals on the elements of conservation easements. Additionally, other landholders in the basin were sent information on the project along with an offer of assistance if they wish to voluntarily rehabilitate the habitat on their property or place a CEA on their own holdings. Long-term monitoring of project outcomes (e.g., continued regeneration of native plant growth, permanent reductions in human impacts) will occur through periodic inspections by the CLSLC to ensure CEA compliance.

The Riparian Remediation Buffer Project is typical of the types of activities undertaken by conservancies and land trusts in the Lake Superior basin. By coordinating efforts and learning from one another's experiences through meetings of the LSLTP, such organizations can better meet the key objective of developing sustainable lifestyles in the watershed and help the Lake Superior Binational Program achieve its overall goals.

### **7.1.3 The Great Lakes Cities Initiative**

The Great Lakes Cities Initiative was established in 2003 by Richard M. Daley, Mayor of Chicago, to provide a forum for cities to be involved in Great Lakes decision-making with federal, state, and provincial governments. Mayor Daley and Toronto Mayor David Miller currently co-chair the group's 15-member steering committee. Through this initiative, cities in the Lake Superior basin participate actively with international organizations, the federal governments of Canada and the United States, state and provincial governments, Great Lakes organizations, and environmental groups on environmental projects. For example, in Canada, mayors in a number of cities have charted a course for the care of the world's largest freshwater system. This work focuses on issues with environmental and economic implications for municipalities, including: water quality, waste water and storm water treatment, beach closures, algal blooms, water diversion, invasive species, shoreline restoration, water levels, and waterfront redevelopment.

Throughout the Great Lakes region, local governments have assumed a leadership role to work in partnership with federal, provincial, and state agencies to restore and protect the watershed. They are committed to educating the public, the business community, and others on the challenges and opportunities of maintaining a sustainable society. To do so, elected officials encourage other local, regional, and national governments, conservation authorities, and First Nations groups, as well as business, agricultural, and environmental organizations, to build on existing regional and binational networks. The aim is to share best practices and policies for preservation and remediation of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River ecosystem.

### **7.1.4 EarthWise Thunder Bay**

EarthWise Thunder Bay is a community-based group that was formed in May 2004 when the concept of developing a "Community Environmental Action Plan" was proposed to the City Council of the City of Thunder Bay. The action plan was proposed by a delegation from the Zero Waste Action Team (ZWAT). ZWAT is a local group with membership from the commercial, industrial, and institutional sector that have come together to promote programs to reduce waste going into the municipal landfill site. City Council unanimously endorsed the proposal, and an EarthWise Steering Committee was established with representatives from City Council, industry, the business community, the University and College, and established environmental groups.

With funding from the City, a coordinator was hired for an initial two-year period. A funding proposal was developed and submitted to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). FCM applications for funding are based on the potential for greenhouse gas reductions that will result from the proposal. Recently, EarthWise was informed that they have been successful in this application, and they are awaiting the written notification. This grant will be used to develop a community energy map identifying where energy is used in the community and the type of energy (electricity, natural gas, fuel, etc.) that supplies those needs. This study will be used as a baseline to measure success (reductions in energy used) going forward.

EarthWise has developed an “Environmental Policy” for the City of Thunder Bay that was adopted by City Council in December 2005. This policy requires municipal departments to report annually on how each department has complied with the policy each year.

EarthWise does not want to replace existing groups in the community that are already doing a good job of promoting sustainable projects, such as Trees Thunder Bay, which promotes tree planting on municipal and private property, and Thunder Bay Trails Association, which promotes walking and bicycling trail development throughout the City, and so on. EarthWise exists to assist those groups in achieving their goals. This may be done by accessing funding that is otherwise not available to them (e.g., funding that requires a private/municipal partnership), or by bringing groups with similar interests together to develop coordinated plans that will better advance everyone’s interests.

Working groups have been formed with representatives from existing groups with similar interests to develop suggestions that they collectively believe will be critical to ensure the sustainability of the community. To date, the following subcommittees have been established:

- “Greening Committee” – tree planting, trails development, green spaces, residential development, and reducing liter, anti-idling etc.;
- “Energy Committee” – promoting green energy development, reducing energy used in residential, commercial, and industrial settings, and developing an energy footprint for the City of Thunder Bay;
- “Green Building Committee” – promoting more energy efficient buildings in residential, municipal, and commercial settings, and retrofitting existing buildings;
- “Food Security Committee” – promoting community gardens, increasing food availability, organic gardens, and the market for locally grown produce.

The goals of the EarthWise Thunder Bay Environmental Action Plan are as follows:

- Produce a Community Environmental Action Plan that identifies specific actions for solving problems, measuring the results, and promoting the vision of the community.
- Consider a 20 percent reduction of Green House Gases (GHG) for the City (organization) and 6 percent reduction of GHG for the community (residential, institutional, commercial, and industrial) from 1994 baseline levels, by the year 2013 as an interim measure, subject to a review of a finalized emissions inventory and the development of Community Environmental Action Plan, to ensure that the target is realistic for the both City and the community.
- Improve community health and quality of life and ensure long-term sustainability by implementing cost-effective action strategies.
- Promote public awareness of and responsibility for environmental issues and to increase public support for action strategies and investments.
- Strengthen the capacity to manage and implement programs, and the ability to obtain financing from provincial and national institutions and sponsors.
- Promote partnerships between The City of Thunder Bay, citizens, First Nations, businesses, industry, non-profit agencies, educational institutions, rural communities and Northern Ontario towns and cities.
- Work together in solving community and regional problems.
- Identify, assess and set environmental priorities for action based on community values and scientific data.

When each of these committees has developed a list of critical projects, the EarthWise Steering Committee will compile a master list and organize an open community meeting. Citizens will

hear a short description by a champion for each project and then have an opportunity to ask questions regarding the project before voting on the top five projects they feel will do the most for the community to ensure sustainability.

The EarthWise Steering Committee will then work with the Thunder Bay City Council and appropriate existing community groups to find ways to get those projects completed. This process will be repeated as new priorities arise.

### **7.1.5 Sustainable Chequamegon**

In 2005, a grass roots effort called the Sustainable Chequamegon Initiative commenced along the southern shores of Lake Superior. The Initiative is based on principles outlined in the Swedish Natural Step framework, which has been used by over 60 communities in Sweden to guide them toward sustainable planning and development. The first step for the Sustainable Chequamegon Initiative was an eco-municipality workshop sponsored by the Alliance for Sustainability, a local non-profit organization. Sarah James, member of the American Planning Association, and Torbjörn Lahti, project director of Sustainable Robertsfors, both co-authors of *The Natural Step for Communities* (2004), presented ideas and proven methods for applying the Natural Step framework to community planning. This workshop addressed four sustainability guidelines in the Natural Step framework. The guidelines are to: 1) reduce dependence upon fossil fuels, underground metals, and minerals; 2) reduce dependence on synthetic chemicals; 3) reduce encroachment upon nature (land, water, wildlife, etc.); and 4) meet human needs fairly and efficiently (basic needs first). The 65 workshop participants developed a list of recommended actions to meet these guidelines. The recommended actions were placed in one of the following categories: Tourism, Food/Agriculture, Education, Housing, Transportation, Waste, Business/Economic Development, and Energy.

In Summer 2005, the City Councils of Ashland and Washburn, Wisconsin, located on Chequamegon Bay, Lake Superior, passed eco-municipality resolutions that “endorse the principles of sustainable community development” described in the Natural Step framework. These resolutions commit city employees and elected officials to implement practices of sustainable community development whenever possible in their “planning, policy making, and municipal practices”. These communities are among the first in the nation to adopt the Natural Step framework as part of their community planning.

Interest in and support for the Sustainable Chequamegon Initiative continues to grow. The Alliance for Sustainability organized Study Circles in Bayfield, LaPointe, Ashland, and Washburn during Fall 2005. About 70 citizens participated in the Study Circles, which met weekly over an 8-week period to review and discuss the book, *The Natural Step for Communities: How Cities and Towns Can Change to Sustainable Practices*. Ideas and projects identified by these groups were presented at a January 2006 community celebration of the first year of the initiative. Further efforts are underway in 2006 to continue community involvement and development of sustainability in the Chequamegon Bay region. This and other related information is available on the web pages of the Alliance for Sustainability at [www.allianceforsustainability.org/](http://www.allianceforsustainability.org/).